

COMMUNITY POWER

Partners on Waste Education & Reduction
Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board
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Sustainability Follow-Up Report Round 10 2010-2011 Grantees

*Prepared by LG Consulting, LLC
Laurie Gustafson*

The information in this report was gathered from follow-up interviews with Round 10 grantees whose projects ended in August of 2011. Follow-up was conducted with six of the 18 grantees including: Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota (EJAM), Hubert Olson Elementary PTA, Orono Schools, Anoka County 4-H and Dakota County 4-H.

The purpose of the follow-up interviews is to determine the lasting impact of the grant on the organization. The results are similar to findings from follow-ups with groups from the nine previous years. As previously found, a high number of groups continue to offer some waste reduction education beyond the end of their contract with SWMCB.

Replicable products or programs

Of the groups interviewed, all of them had products that could be used by others. A product or program is something that is developed as part of a grant project that can be accessed and implemented by a different community group with little or no cost. These products will continue to be included, when possible, in the grantee resources section on www.rethinkrecycling.com.

For example, at the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, they created a "mix and match" activity that helps them gauge the skills of the youth before they begin a program. Also, they've adapted a curriculum called Wise Kids Environmental Curriculum, which they are using as part of their after school programming.

At EJAM, they continue to use the "Fresh Life" video in their work with youth at Patrick Henry High School. Pledge forms, the survey and a newsletter format are grant products from the Olson Elementary project, which are posted on the website. The Orono Schools K-5 Environmental Education Committee worked closely with teachers to develop curriculum that met state educational standards

using reduce, reuse, recycling and composting as the teaching topics. The curriculum is being used but they are not currently in a format that can be shared at this time. The Anoka County 4-H created kits that are available for check out by volunteer leaders and staff. And, at Dakota County 4-H, they wrote lesson plans with kits, which are available for check out as well.

Continue Waste Reduction Programming

100% of groups interviewed continue to offer waste reduction information and/or programming past the grant period, reaching about 5,400 additional people.

As in past years, nearly all of the groups interviewed continue to educate and engage their audiences in waste and toxicity reduction after their grant ends. Round 10 grantees report they have actively engaged an additional 5,400 new people with waste reduction messages since their Community POWER grants ended in August of 2011.

Examples

At Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, all the youth programming has continued and reached additional participants with activities like making non-toxic cleaners and learning about how to reduce waste. A new grant from Hennepin County has allowed them to reach out parents of youth involved in their programs and to the Heritage Park neighborhood.

At EJAM and with the help with a grant from Hennepin County and General Mills, they are using the Fresh Life video created through their Community POWER grant to reach out to more students.

Olson Elementary parents still post monthly topics on their bulletin board to remind teachers about America Recycles Day, Earth Week, e-waste and juice packaging recycling.

In Orono Schools, the most significant part developed with grant funds, the curriculum continues to be taught in the K-5 classes.

In Anoka County, the 4-H volunteers have been able to check out the waste reduction and recycling kits and lessons created through the grant. In addition, the recycling and reducing waste curriculum using resources purchased through the grant continues to be taught. At least one reduce, reuse, recycle lesson has been taught at each of the five sites where they have programming in the past year.

In Dakota County, the 4-H volunteers also have access to the kits and lessons created through the grant. 4-H staff use the lesson plans developed at their programming sites throughout the county. At the county fair, they offer recycling in the 4-H building and in their summer programs, continue to practice what they preach by using reused supplies instead of buying new. The recycle stage at the fair is also still being used.

Internal Waste Management

Waste reduction and internal waste management practices became a larger priority for all of the interviewed grantees. Many grantees report that waste reduction became a larger priority for their organization after participating in the grant. Most groups made changes to reduce waste in their office or building. Common changes include recycling and reusing more and taking on more environmental actions.

Examples

Students have created recycling centers in the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center building, which has increased the amount of recycling, but they are looking for ways to improve the program even more. And, they've started using reusable dishes for the youth programs.

At Kwanza Community Church, where EJAM is located, they've started using compostable plates and utensils. EJAM is working with Kwanza to help them recycle more.

Meetings within the Orono Schools are low-waste, green meetings and double side photo copies.

Before making any purchases at Anoka County 4-H, they first determine if there's a way to reuse a resource or to find it used before buying something new.

Require Additional Funding & Barriers

Three of the six groups interviewed required additional funding to continue their projects. Several groups used their own operating budgets to continue their projects, while others have sought and received resources from other funders. Some groups report they would need additional funds for materials to continue their projects while others mentioned that they need more staff capacity to continue pieces of their projects. The following are additional barriers experienced by grantees to continuing their projects:

At Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, staff indicated that it's been difficult to connect with participants once they leave the classes.

At EJAM, while they've had consistent interest from Patrick Henry High School students and staff, they would like to connect more with parents.

At Olson Elementary, parent volunteers say that there is not sufficient interest from all teachers to continue as they did during the grant. And, as volunteers, they have limited time to provide the leadership to continue.

The Orono Schools parent volunteers have not been able to continue organizing the student Green Team nor the Environmental Fair because of lack funding.

Feedback on Community POWER Program

When asked what was most helpful about the way Community POWER is structured (in terms of what helps the grantees to be successful in their projects), the former grantees reported that the funding and technical support provided by project managers and county staff was most valuable, followed by grantee meetings, networking and resource materials.

More Environmental Behavior Changes

Community POWER serves as a catalyst for additional beneficial environmental changes. Often, once a person or organization begins to make changes to benefit the environment, like instituting waste reduction and recycling, other changes follow.

Three of the six organizations interviewed have instituted things like energy and water conservation measures, and as a result of being involved with the Community POWER program.

In addition, all of the responding project managers stated that they have made personal changes in their own life, such as increasing waste reduction, recycling, composting, and other measures as a direct result of involvement in Community POWER.

Rethink Recycling and County Resources

Grantees were asked which resources from the counties and the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board Responses have been most helpful.

Staff at Phyllis Wheatley Community Center received great feedback on the spray bottles and making non-toxic cleaners.

At EJAM, they are using the display on reducing packaging waste, which they created based on similar county displays.

At Olson Elementary, they liked the button maker and all of the free resources they could give away, like pencils, stickers, and bookmarks, which they received from the SWMCB and Hennepin County.

At Anoka County 4-H, they thought the recycling wheel and Rethink Recycling displays were most useful.

At Dakota County 4-H, they checked out and used the kits from Dakota County including the recycling wheel and recycle relay. They also used the packaging reduction display and activities from Washington County.

Resources Created

Several of the past grantees have created resources, which they use. If made available, these resources have been posted to RethinkRecycling.com, on the organization's page. Below is a list of the created resources.

Phyllis Wheatley Community Center—Adapted the Wise Kids Environmental Curriculum

EJAM—Fresh Life video

Olson Elementary—Pledge and Newsletter example

Orono Schools—K-5 Curriculum

Anoka County—4-H Take and Teach totes, which are available to leaders

Dakota County—4-H lesson plans

Lessons Learned

Below are things that the grantees said they wished they knew before they had started their project.

- Important to emphasize quality and to stay within a limited scope.
- Figure out a way to get parents more involved.
- More direction and help understanding what's realistic to accomplish.
- Implementing curriculum is really a two-year process.
- Make sure everyone involved is clear about the project goals and objectives.
- Important to schedule regular meetings to review progress and to keep informed about changes.
- Don't procrastinate. Start with realistic goals.